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in their bathing costume, immediately begin the task of endeavouring to seize the flag, one after another they continue tumbling into the water and raising again to renew the attempt. 527 526

Gradually the greasy matter diminishes and the competitors are able to advance further. At last the winner with the prize flag in hand, amidst great shouts of "bravo," loud whistling, and clapping of hands announces the end of the National Feast for that day.

The 7th of September is also commemorated by a melancholy, and at the same time imposing, ceremony at the Co-Cathedral Church of St. John in Valletta. 796 769

On the morning of this day the celebrant, preceded by the Chapter and Clergy, descend into the crypt beneath the High Altar, and while chanting

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796 *requiems* for the repose of the souls of
769 the knights interred there, and all the other dead who fell in the great siege, sprinkles holy water upon the tombs, while the great bells, in the towers above, peal mournfully the legend which the Maltese voice in the words "Il-libera tal Cavalieri" (the funeral of the Knights).

527 For some years past a purely civil commemoration of the glorious Victory of the 8th of Sept. (1565) when the Cross triumphed over the Crescent, has been celebrated, however, not on the 8th of September, but on the 1st Sunday after that date in Valletta, and the Sunday after that at Vittoriosa and Cospicua, while on the following Sunday the celebration takes place at Sliema and Zabbar.

In Valletta, the St. George's Square and Str. Reale, are worth seeing on this occasion.

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ulous effigy of the B. V. Mary, venerated in that shrine excavated out of the rock.

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ALL SOULS' DAY
2nd November

In Malta, the same as in any other Roman Catholic country, a feast is also celebrated for the dead, and the Cemeteries especially that of the "Addolorata," which ranks amongst the finest in Europe, are, on the 1st and 2nd of November the favourite resort of nearly the whole population of the towns and of the neighbouring villages.

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Amidst mournful tingling and tolling of the church bells, countless inhabitants, mostly clad in the habiliments of grief, and murmuring prayers, are seen wending their way to the Cemetery. Arrived

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there they proceed to the tombs of their departed dear ones.

[782] Here a widow and orphans are seen knelt in prayer at the vault of their respective husband and father, or perhaps some daughters at the resting place of their ever lost mother or father. There some father and mother contemplating the last abode of their beloved son in whom they had placed their future hopes; they are all there reverently and devoutly reciting prayers to the Almighty for the repose of the souls of their deceased.

The graves on these two days are very beautifully decorated. Some are literally covered by masses of flowers, some hung with wreaths and crosses woven of the loveliest blossoms, others converted into a temporary garden, with willows, cypress, and other shrubs.

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The custom of strewing garlands of flowers upon the graves of the departed is derived from the ancients who used to crown the deceased with flowers in token of the shortness of life. (*) It appears also from "Pliny's Natural History," from "Cicero's Oration on Lucius Plancus" and from "Virgil's sixth Æneid," that the strewing of flowers on the graves was a funeral rite among the heathens—St. Ambrose, however, in his funeral oration on the death of Valentinian, has these words: "I will not sprinkle his grave with flowers but pour on his spirit the odour of Christ. Let others pour baskets of flowers—Christ is our lily and with this will I consecrate his relics." (†)

(*) Gough, in the introduction to his second volume of Sepulchral munuments, page 5.

(†) Brand's Popular Antiquities.

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At the *Angelus*, these devout mourners, after hours spent in prayers and in going round the cypress groves, reading the beautiful epitaphs inscribed on the rich marble tombstones and the beautiful monuments, take a last glance at the tombs, as if bidding a fond and affectionate farewell to their inanimate occupants, and then return to their city or country homes, either murmuring their prayers for the repose of the souls of the faithful departed, or talking about the many magnificent mausoleums, and the beauty of floral decorations lavished on them. The nearer the crowds approach their dwelling places the more they are reminded of the sacred day, by the mournful pealing of the bells which seem to say "Remember those you have lost, for to-day is the day of the dead."

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It is also the custom in Malta to commemorate all Souls' day by distributing relief among the poor and needy. Collections are made for the purpose of purchasing bread and providing dinner for the poor in the lower quarters of the towns and populous centres. 796 769 1735

A walk at about 11 a.m., on the 2nd of November, as far as the square in front of the Capuchins' Convent at Vittoriosa or at Floriana, or to some other place where the relief is distributed, affords not a little delight. [792]

About a hundred poor old men and women, some of whom either half crippled or blind are to be seen struggling towards the big boiler in which the dinner is being cooked, with something in the shape of a pot in their hands, each and every one eager to get his or her share of the nicely cooked dinner.

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796 769 [735] When these poor creatures get their share, they go gladly back to some corner to eat what has been procured for them by the contributions received from the charitably disposed.

Before leaving the description of the celebration of All Souls' Day, it would be interesting also to mention another custom which prevails in the Island on the 2nd of November.

On this day most of the charnel-houses are thrown open and lighted up with scores of oil lamps and decked out with flowers, while crowds throng the vaults to visit the bones of their friends and relatives.

[792] The most crowded of these vaults, however, used to be that below the Capuchin church and Convent at Flo-

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riana. (*). Here the fleshless skeletons of the monks who died in the convent are dressed up in the robes which they wore during life, and arranged erect in niches along the wall. 796 769 [792]

St. Odilo, abbot of Cluny, in 998 instituted the "Commemoration of all the faithful departed" in all the monasteries of his Congregation, on the 1st of November, which was soon adopted by the whole western Church. The Council of Oxford in 1222, declared it a holiday of the second class, on which certain necessary and important kinds of work were allowed (†). In Malta however the 2nd of November is only a day of devotion. 175 796 769

(*) The opening of this vault for the public on All Soul's day has been stopped for some years past to prevent some accidents through overcrowding. Visitors, however, are allowed in at any time of the year by applying for permission to the Father Superior.

(†) BUTLER, "Life of Saints."